

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03449 251944Z

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ACTION NEA-05

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7069

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3449

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EDX PINT LE
SUBJECT: IV GRANTEE IMAM MUSA AS SADR

REF: STATE 58018

1. AGREE COMPLETELY WITH DEPT'S CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE GOL SENSITIVITIES TO OVERDOING WELCOME OF IMAM MUSA SADR. IN ORDER MINIMIZE MISUNDERSTANDING AND POSSIBLE EMBARRASSMENT WE REQUESTED FORMER FONMIN ABOU HAMAD RAISE QUESTION IF IMAM'S VISIT TO US WITH PRESIDENT FRANGIE MARCH 15, MAKING POINT THAT OUR INVITATION ORIGINALLY MOTIVATED BY IMAM'S STRONG SUPPORT OF GOL AND PRESIDENT DURING EVENTS LAST MAY-JUNE, AND EXTENDED TO IMAM SEVERAL MONTHS AGO. ABOU HAMAD DID SO AND REPORTED BACK THAT PRESIDENT UNDERSTOOD AND APPROVED OF OUR REASONS FOR EXTENDING OFFICIAL INVITATION TO IMAM AND AGREED WITH ABOU HAMAD THAT TRIP IS STILL GOOD IDEA. FRANGIE HAD ONLY ONE REQUEST, ACCORDING TO ABOU HAMAD, NAMELY THAT IMAM "NOT BE TREATED AS CHIEF OF STATE" (HE HAD JUST BEEN RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT ASSAD OF SYRIA).

2. GIVEN RAPID UPSURGE OF POLITICAL IMPORTANCE IMAM, WHO HAS CLEARLY DISPLACED KAMEL ASSAD AS MOST INFLUENTIAL SHIA POLITICAL FIGURE AND WHOSE STRENGTH APPARENTLY STILL GROWING, IT ALL MORE IMPORTANT THAT HE RECEIVE BEST POSSIBLE TREATMENT WHILE IN UNITED STATES, INCLUDING OPPORTUNITY DISCUSS OUR MIDDLE EAST POLICY WITH HIGH-RANKING USG OFFICIALS. ON OTHER HAND, IT WOULD BE WISE TO DOWNPLAY PUBLICITY AND PURELY CEREMONIAL VISITS OF
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OFFICIAL NATURE (E.G., CALL ON VICE PRESIDENT FORD).

3. IN CONNECTION IMAM'S POLITICAL ACTIVITIES (SUBJECT OF AIRGRAM PRESENTLY IN PREPARATION), DEPT SHOULD BE AWARE THAT OVER PAST TWO MONTHS HE HAS UNDERGONE AT LEAST TEMPORARY ESTRANGEMENT WITH IRAN, AND HAS BEEN RECEIVING SOME SUPPORT FROM IRAQ WHICH EXPLOITING EVERY OPPORTUNITY TRY AND BUILD SUPPORT IN LEBANON FOR ITS NEGATIVE ATTITUDE RE MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS AND RE EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA. IMAM LIKELY HAVE INCREASING INFLUENCE ON SHIA ATTITUDES, INCLUDING THOSE OF SYRIAN ALAWITES WITH WHOM HE HAS ESTABLISHED CLOSE CONNECTIONS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE IMAM HAS SOLD HIMSELF TO IRAQIS, AND HOPE THAT PERHAPS SOME WAY WILL BE FOUND REPAIR HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH IRANIANS WHO REPRESENT MODERATE POLE OF ATTRACTION FOR SHIA. IN ANY EVENT, IMAM IS SHREWD AND OPEN-MINDED ENOUGH TO TAKE FULL ACCOUNT OF WHAT HE SEES AND HEARS IN THE UNITED STATES ABOUT THE FUTURE OF LEBANON AND THE MIDDLE EAST IN GENERAL. ANY MATERIAL SUPPORT WHICH HE MIGHT GENERATE FROM PRIVATE SOURCES IN AMERICAN SHIA COMMUNITY FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROJECTS IN SOUTH LEBANON, AND ANY REASSURANCES HE MIGHT RECEIVED FROM USG ABOUT SECURITY OF SOUTH LEBANON AND ITS WATERS, WOULD INCREASE FAVORABLE IMPACT OF HIS VISIT.

GODLEY

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